Claims:

1. An optical imaging contrast agent with affinity for an abnormally expressed biological target associated with CRC.

2. A contrast agent as claimed in claim 1 with molecular weight below 10000 Daltons.

3. A contrast agent as claimed in claim 1 or 2 of formula I

V-L-R (I)

wherein V is one or more vector moieties having affinity for an abnormally expressed target in CRC, L is a linker moiety or a bond and R is one ore more reporter moieties detectable in optical imaging.

4. A contrast agent as claimed in any of claims 1 to 3 comprising a contrast agent substrate, wherein the target is an abnormally expressed enzyme, such that the contrast agent changes pharmacodynamic properties and/or pharmacokinetic properties upon a chemical modification from a contrast agent substrate to a contrast agent product upon a specific enzymatic transformation.

5. A contrast agent as claimed in any of claims 1 to 4 having affinity for any of the targets selected from COX-2, beta-catenin, E-cadherin, P-cadherin, various kinases, Her-2, MMPs, cyclins, P53, thymidylate synthase, VEGF receptors, EGF receptors, K-ras, adenomatous polyposis coli protein, cathepsin B, uPAR, c-met, mucins and gastrin receptors.

6. A contrast agent as claimed in claims 3 or 4 wherein V is selected from peptides, peptoid moieties, oligonucleotides, oligosaccharides, lipid-related compounds and traditional organic drug-like small molecules.

7. A contrast agent as claimed in any of claims 3-6 wherein R is a dye that interacts with light in the wavelength region from the ultraviolet to the infrared part of the electromagnetic spectrum.

8. A pharmaceutical composition for optical imaging for diagnosis of CRC, for follow up of progress of CRC development or for follow up of treatment of CRC, comprising a contrast agent as defined in any of claims 1 to 7 together with at least one pharmaceutically acceptable carrier or excipient.

9. Use of a contrast agent as claimed in any of claims 1 to 7 for the manufacture of a diagnostic agent for use in a method of optical imaging of CRC involving administration of said diagnostic agent to an animate subject and generation of an image of at least part of said subject.

10. A method of generating an optical image of an animate subject involving administering a contrast agent to said subject and generating an optical image of at least a part of said subject to which said contrast agent has distributed, characterized in that as said contrast agent is used a contrast agent as defined in an any of claims 1 to 7.

11. Method as claimed in claim 10 for diagnosis of CRC, for follow up of the progress of CRC development or follow up of treatment of CRC using a contrast agent as defined in any of claims 1 to 7.

12. Use of a contrast agent as defined in any of claim 1 to 7 for optical imaging of CRC.